



## World Council of Churches

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Your Holiness Pope Francis,  
Your Holinesses, Beatitudes, Eminences and Excellences, Reverend Fathers,  
Brothers in Christ,

I bring you greetings from the fellowship of the more than 340 member churches of the World Council of Churches on behalf of the moderator of the Central Committee, Dr Agnes Abuom, and of the General Secretary, Rev. Dr Olav Fykse Tveit.

The Holy Father underlined at the opening of this very important event in the life of the worldwide Roman Catholic Church: The synod is not a convention or a parliament, "but an expression of the church; it is the church that walks together to read reality with the eyes of faith and with the heart of God."

I would like to add to this, that the Synod – as I have experienced it - is also a great and wonderful learning community. Listening to each other, you affirm together the Gospel values you share, how they are expressed in the tradition of the church and how they can be lived out and practiced today. Listening to each other, you also experience the rich diversity of the worldwide church and at the same time the need for deepening the unity among you in dialogue with each other, and through and with the Petrine ministry of the successor of St. Peter.

I can assure you that many of the member churches of the WCC follow closely the news stream on the Synod. And many of them are praying for you, that the wisdom and power of the Holy Spirit may guide and enlighten you in your efforts for the best of the church and the millions and millions of Christians everywhere in the world.

Concerning the commitment that "the church that walks together to read reality with the eyes of faith and with the heart of God" the World Council of Churches has been speaking since the 2013 Assembly in Korea of a "pilgrimage of justice and peace", underlining that we are together on a faith journey and are deeply committed to justice and peace as signs of God's reign to come. This commitment to express the values of God's reign as justice and peace is very significant for all those who live together in different types of family life. That is the first and innermost circle of our life together as we seek to bring fairness and reconciliation. From my own continent of Latin America, and from my experience as Moderator of the WCC, I know how many women and men, and not the least children, need that the church be a fellowship of inclusion and healing, recognising our differences in the bond of love. The openness required for change, and for new commitment to God's call today, should be a mark of our pilgrimage as a common journey of the churches.

On its own journey through history, the WCC as a fellowship of member churches has often experienced tensions between our commitment to the unity of the church and the diversity of being church in different political, economic, cultural and religious contexts. Discerning the way forward, in the power of the Holy Spirit, we are no longer taking majority decisions, but we are searching for the way by consensus. This helps us to see how much indeed we have in common and how little it is that continues to separate us. We search for new learning, listening carefully to all who are sharing their lives and their challenges. Despite those differences that still exist, consensus helps us to move forward together, responding to Christ's prayer that his disciples all may be one so that the world may believe (John 17:21).

May God bless you and this Synod abundantly.

Thank you for this opportunity to speak to you.

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to read 'Walter Altmann', written in a cursive style.

Rev. Dr Walter Altmann  
Moderator of the WCC Central Committee (2006-2013)

Geneva, October 2015